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# GRIMOIRE





# *Grimoire*

2008-2009

Volume 48

# Contents

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MORNINGS IN TRANSLATION	7
<b>Christine Keely</b>	
A DAY AT THE BALLPARK	8
<b>Liz Carbone</b>	
TUCK NEVERLASTING	9
<b>Jonathan Juliano</b>	
HOMEROOM	10
<b>Sean Ellis</b>	
POETRY WORKSHOP	14
<b>John Krall</b>	
RESURFACING	14
<b>Rebecca Dobrzynski</b>	
DOUBLE DOPPLEGANGER LAND	15
<b>Cara Conocer</b>	
UNTITLED	16
<b>Hayley Boyle</b>	
A LEARNED LESSON IN SERMON MAKING	17
<b>Chris Grosso</b>	
THE AMAZING UNICOLOR JUMPSUIT	18
<b>Eric Donovan</b>	
NOSTOS	26
<b>John Krall</b>	
THE STORM	35
<b>Hayley Boyle</b>	
NOT A PROPER ELEGY	36
<b>Cara Conocer</b>	
LYRA	37
<b>Christine Keely</b>	
CHINESE FOOD	38
<b>Hayley Boyle</b>	
BETTER STATE	39
<b>Kimberly A. Ledgister</b>	
DACTYLOGRAPHY	40
<b>Christine Keely</b>	

THAT TEST	41
<b>Robert O'Brien</b>	
I DON'T DREAM HERE	42
<b>Sean Ellis</b>	
E.M.	43
<b>Rebecca Dobrzynski</b>	
DAUGHTER TO MOTHER	44
<b>Hayley Boyle</b>	
A PASTOR AFTERWARD	45
<b>CHRIS GROSSO</b>	
YELLOW DANDELIONS	46
<b>Hayley Boyle</b>	
THE DOCKS	47
<b>Jonathan Juliano</b>	
MISCONCEPTIONS	48
<b>Andrew Hibschan</b>	
POETRY READING	56
<b>Jonathan Juliano</b>	
UNTITLED	63
<b>Nicole Maday</b>	
CATCH YOUR DEATH	65
<b>Hayley Boyle</b>	
TO DEFINE THE LACK	69
<b>Erica de la Cruz</b>	
HOW TO TEACH PERSPECTIVE TO	70
HISTORY STUDENTS	
<b>Christopher Grosso</b>	



# Staff

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## EDITORS

Jon Juliano  
Danielle Haffer

## STAFF

Vinny Vella  
Lauren Balliet  
Rebecca Dobrzynski  
Liz Tabasko  
Hayley Boyle  
Elizabeth Bond  
Mark Natale  
Dave Bradley  
Christine Keely  
Liz Carbone

## ADVISOR

Dr. Kevin Grauke

## LAYOUT DESIGN

Vinny Vella  
Jon Juliano  
Danielle Haffer  
Liv Biagi

## COVER PHOTO

Rebecca Dobrzynski



# Letter From the Editor(s)

"...You're searching...  
For things that don't exist; I mean beginnings.  
Ends and beginnings - there are no such things.  
There are only middles."

~Robert Frost

Dear Grimoire,

You have been very good to me. I will always remember the second time I met you. The first time was in a meeting for potential college freshmen destined to be English majors. However, to be honest, I did not notice you at all. I glanced at you in a folder given to every freshman at this meeting. I tossed you in my backpack and eventually placed you in the bottom desk drawer and there you stayed.

It was the second time that we met, a year later, that I realized we had so much in common, and that we would become such good friends. We met at an open mic night in Backstage. Whenever the audience waited for someone to get on stage, I looked down, flipping through my journal hoping nobody looked in my direction. I finally got on stage trying to impress you. I swallowed knives of nervousness, nicking notches into my throat on the way down. I can't even remember what poem it was that I read. I am certain that I no longer have that poem anymore. I got on stage and sat on the lone stool. Eyes were on me, including yours. I read my poem with a shaky voice. Words lingered on my tongue, scared to leave. I had no confidence back then. I finally reached the last line of the poem. People clapped as I hurried off stage. My heart was pounding, but you embraced me and told me I did a good job, and that we should hang out. And so we did. You invited me to your house on the third floor of the Union building one Wednesday when you were having all of your friends over.

You have been such a good friend to me. I will never forget you. I leave you in good hands, and hopefully you will mean as much to future readers/writers as you did to me. For you will always mean more to me than a bullet-point on my resume. Knowing you has really taught me a lot about myself, and I would like to thank you. You are forever a part of this school's history, and as long as students will need an outlet to express themselves, you will always have friends, and will always have a place at La Salle.

Keep on Arting,  
Jonathan Juliano

# Mornings in Translation

CHRISTINE KEELY

---

Remember in  
restless untwistings  
of a sheet, I am  
a ghost you conjured  
covered in body, aching  
without. Your hand  
through the space  
you made to touch it  
is not mourning, but  
forget full of or  
you walking through walls or  
I've built them.  
From the sound up  
of waking, fleshless  
until you lend me lips:

a kiss list of  
I'm up; Are you  
staying long?  
that's taped up to skin.



# A Day at the Ballpark

LIZ CARBONE

---

"Dollar Hot Dog Day," she tells me  
As we stumble and push our way  
Out of the school bus.  
The last notes of a song on my iPod fade  
As I stare Up, Up, Up  
Stadium capturing my view.  
First comes the ticket line, then security booth.  
Cameraman takes our picture- we'll never see it.  
More lines for peanuts and crackerjack  
Hot dogs and french fries and candy snacks.  
"Ever been to a baseball game before?"  
"Yeah, once.  
I didn't really pay attention."  
With that comes an explanation of  
Positions and players and  
The Philly Fanatic, who  
Coincidentally,  
Is driving an ATV around the field.  
The game opens as I try to remember  
Who is who, and what position they play.  
Rollins, Utley... Bucknell? No, wait, Burrell!  
Eyes on the giant screen, and then  
Back to the field.  
There are groans as the scoreboard reaches one to seven  
Opposition leads  
And the jackasses next to us won't do the wave.  
The night's a disappointment  
As we pile back on the bus.  
But the loss is a distant memory, when  
Eight weeks later,  
The Fanatic passes us by  
Dancing on a float, that is  
Not so Coincidentally,  
Pumping confetti out  
Over the sea of red below.

# Backwards Love

JONATHAN JULIANO



# Tuck Neverlasting

JONATHAN JULIANO

I take a bold black Sharpie

And write my life on the face of Today

Like it got too drunk at a party.

My beautiful biography written in  
chicken Scratch graffiti on its supple cheek,

I feel one with the world momentarily.

But still, meet me in my memories

Because even permanent marker is only temporary.



# Homeroom

SEAN ELLIS

Mrs. Kenney sat in her chair. The thirteen-year-old hormonal time bombs trickled into the classroom. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror on her desk. Some gray hair had come out of her tightly woven bun, she did nothing about this. She just sat in her chair trying not to look at her new students.

Soon she would have to give them the speech. There were rules that had to be reviewed and policies that had to be outlined. Just like any other first day of school, these things had to be covered. Mrs. Kenney was a homeroom teacher after all and this was her job.

She continued to sit there avoiding eye contact. It was hours before she could go home and watch *CSI*. Almost three decades she had been teaching and things were good for only the first three minutes. The romantic notions fed to her when she was young had proved untrue. Mrs. Kenney stared at her lap. There was a run in her stockings. This did not bother her. Things like this did not matter. No Prince Charming was coming for Mrs. Kenney. The only ones who would see would be the students. What did they matter? The next Einstein was not sitting in the classroom.

Mrs. Kenney stared at the clock in the back of the classroom. Time was ticking away too quickly. Not fast enough for her life, however. She only had two minutes until homeroom began. She was going to have to talk soon. She was going to have to tell these pubescent pupils things they did not care about. Things she did not care about, the things that her superiors dictated that she had to do.

Just like that the bell rang. It was homeroom. Mrs. Kenney could no longer avoid the inevitable. She had to begin her speech. The students looked earnestly at her. She knew they would lose interest in what she had to say shortly after she began speaking. However, she had to tell them what she was supposed to. Mrs. Kenney stood up and...

*Good morning class. My name is Mrs. Kenney and I will be your homeroom teacher for this year. I know that this is the first day of eighth grade for all of you and you all must be very nervous. However, none of you should be. Not because things will go smoothly*

For will be fine, but because none of this really matters. Please trust what I tell you. If any of this did matter, then the Board of Education would care more about you. I promise you they don't care. All they are concerned with are test scores and not getting sued.

I see that many of you are surprised by this, but you will come to get used to it. A feeling of miserable indifference will one day come over all of you.

Now I am supposed to discuss the dress code first today. The principal finds it to be very important. At least that is what he says. Of course he doesn't actually care. He doesn't really care about much—just collecting his paycheck and drinking scotch in his office.

Look at me getting side-tracked; it is the dress code I wish to discuss. If you all would turn to page three of your orientation booklets we can begin. Now you will see that line one states that all students are to keep their undergarments concealed under their clothing; however, we all know that none of you will. You boys will have your boxers on constant display; perhaps it makes you feel tough. And you girls will have your underwear become your calling card. Those of you who wear thongs will most likely be known as the easy ones and those of you wearing granny panties will probably go to every school dance alone. We teachers are supposed to scold you for breaking this rule; however, if we do then we put ourselves at risk of being charged with sexual harassment.

Moving to line two, "all students are free to display their uniqueness in an appropriate manner." As we have already discussed, nothing about any of you is appropriate. Nothing about any of you is unique either. I see that there are eleven goth students in this class. All of you dress this ridiculous as a way to be different. Yet there are thirty kids in the class and eleven of you. For all in need of remedial math, that's over one third. All of your objectives of being different have failed, just as many of you will in life.

So I am growing bored of going over the dress code. I have read it every year for all of the twenty-six years that I have wasted away in this building, besides none of you will follow it. I personally wouldn't, but I happen to be very unattractive at this point in my life, at least that is what I am assuming. You see husband no longer wishes to make love to me. My drooping breasts are most likely the reason. I do believe I disgust him. This is why I have taken to drinking vodka at lunch. If any of you have my English class afterwards, I will most likely be buzzed. Please don't mind this.



As I just stated, I am an English teacher. Most of you have very little of a grasp over our language. When you all speak, I want to jam a number two pencil into my ears. Honestly, do you all enjoy sounding like half retarded cave men?

You in the front row, that was a rhetorical question, please put your hand down. And you in the back row, I am not telling you what rhetorical means, so you should also put your hand down.

Now, as a teacher of yours, I will be grading work that you do. When I am doing this I will be tempted to write things on your papers that could most likely get me fired. Some of those comments will be that you're an idiot, that suicide is a good option for you, that you should never procreate, and that I wish your mother had gone through with the abortion. I mean all of these things with all of my heart. Yet unless I am extremely hammered I will refrain from writing them. Instead I will allow the boy that doesn't wash his hands in the bathroom to pass the papers back to you.

Let us now move to classroom rules. You will see that with them comes a sheet for your parents and you to sign. This sheet states that they and you are aware of the rules of the classroom. I have your parents and you sign it so that I have proof of your knowledge of the rules. This helps to cut down on your parents trying to get you out of trouble based on the fact that they think their child is an innocent angel that wasn't aware of what they were doing.

I would like to call your attention to rule number eight. It states that there should be no cell phone use in class, specifically no texting. Now call me old-fashioned, but I don't see what a thirteen year old needs with a cell phone. What you do with the phone is send pictures to each other that would make your mothers cry. There is no need for this. I think of myself as a peaceful woman; however, when you text in my class my mind is filled with visions of bashing the phone into your skull.

Another important rule I would like to highlight is rule number seventeen. This is that, "all students should bring a pencil to class every day." If you don't and you need one I will sell you one for twenty-five cents. I tell my superiors that I use this money for additional classroom supplies, but really I just put it in my vodka fund.

So I am reading the looks on your faces right now and I see that you are all surprised with the number of rules that there are: sixty-three in total. Teachers like to tell their students they have free will

*and an opinion, but really none of you do. You see the curriculum is actually designed to extinguish your ability to think for yourself. We want you to be mindless drones. We don't trust you.*

*Well the bell is about to ring. You all need to go get out there and make some other teacher's life miserable. You youngsters have such promise to be just just as disappointing as all those that came before you. Have a great time here in eighth grade. I hope you all...*

"Good morning class. My name is Mrs. Kenney and I will be your homeroom teacher for this year. I know that this is the first day of eighth grade for all of you and you all must be very nervous. However, none of you should be."

Mrs. Kenney was staring at all of the students' faces. She wanted to scream at them. She wanted to say everything she was thinking. They had not done anything though. Not yet at least. She could not just spurt off at the mouth. She had a pension to think about after all. Besides homeroom was not so bad, neither were her years of teaching. They were working towards something. If she was lucky, she thought, she could get into one of those assisted living facilities when she retired. Perhaps a fancy one that left mints on the pillows and did not put an overdose of potassium in people's IV drips. This would be nice. But for the time being Mrs. Kenney had that bottle of vodka in her left hand bottom drawer. That would make things better.

"Class," Mrs. Kenney's teeth grinded, "you will all be fine."

She asked the students to open up their orientation booklets and proceeded to go through it with them page by page. Afterwards she sat back down and waited for homeroom to be over. Mrs. Kenney avoided eye contact so that she would not have to speak with any of the children for the rest of the class.





# Poetry Workshop



JOHN KRALL

---

---



School-bells aren't used in college like they were in high school;  
The yellow-plaster walls groan sick  
With porous coughing bricks.  
"I was trying to convey a feeling of sorrow there" And he,  
Oh, that's brilliant, that, just brilliant.  
Chopin wrote those nocturnes Whistler painted—  
There was applause, short and choked,  
There was breath, long and drawn.  
I am the deposed King of Zembla.  
When Roscius was an actor in Rome—  
"I was trying to use the anacoluthon device there" And he,  
Oh, that's brilliant, that, a mark of brilliance.  
They sit around me in curves, staring, waiting, and I  
Hear the school-bells ring dismally in my head.



---



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## Resurfacing



REBECCA DOBRZYNSKI

---

---



Tangled in sheets  
I awake from the dream  
with a bemused expression  
at finding myself again  
part of the world.



# Double Doppelganger Land

CARA CONOCER

---

My double doppelganger is close by  
I see her everywhere  
Across the world, the other coast,  
Even at the other end of the hall

Sometimes the same humor with a different laugh  
My colored hair but a little taller,  
Better shirt on and no hat.  
I know she is me and I am her  
As we are all copies of someone.  
Unique was not exactly truth spoken from his lips  
I learned it from the television  
We just replenish the earth with the same people  
So it makes sense

I wonder if she plays me better than I,  
But I'm too afraid to ask  
Her words are probably gibberish backwards talk anyhow,  
What if that girl I saw was more real  
And I'm the copy of the double after all?



# Untitled

HAYLEY BOYLE

I want to write you poems about love, like Charles Bukowski on his worst days—

Writing about love as it really is—

And not sugar coated like springtime and sweet surrenders of the heart

That never keeps the audience guessing,

Since the answers are all lying there staring them in the face.

I want "an easy way to die"

And an easier way of saying let's "get the fuck out of there."

I want to write you poems about life, like Mary Oliver, with intensity and observation—

Writing about life as it really is—

And not seeing it through blindfolds of anguish and despair

That keep most of us from really seeing,

Since we're too busy with the devices of our own importance.

I want to watch the "Wild Geese"

And to "let the soft animal of [my] body love what it loves."

I want to write you poems about death, like Lawrence Ferlinghetti, with acceptance—

Writing about death as it really is—

And not pretending like it is such a bad thing at the end of it all

That we cannot bear to handle such devastation,

Since it seems so remote and distant and altogether cruel.

I want to be with "The Old Italians Dying"

And to wait "for [our] glorious sentence on earth to be finished."

Mostly,

I want to write you a poem of love, life and death,

Like Bukowski and Oliver, and Ferlinghetti all in one,

On my worst day, with intensity and observation, with acceptance.

And I wish to show you that I can just see things—

That I do not need to wash them over with imagination

Since things are perfect—just the way they are—in their imperfections.

Mostly I want to love and live and die in the sublime state of all things  
And to show you how to love and live and die, too.

---

# A Learned Lesson In Sermon Making

CHRIS GROSSO

---

First, the sermon cannot be  
a stagnant pond, too still for the even  
the stagiest teetotaler to tolerate.  
But don't make waves either; just  
hang a rope swing inviting enough  
to skip work to try. Now, the words you use  
should not become manufactured steel  
but be blacksmith original, fitted per request  
(-each tune tuned for the tone-deaf ears).  
Bring your saber, but only as a prop.  
Place it gently before you. No need  
to rattle it, the import is tariff enough.  
Then finger-paint in the air while speaking,  
keeping the colors hot. Do not be afraid  
to point at the flock, letting them know  
they are both counted & accountable  
(in this regard, math is not a good tool  
for measurement). Most importantly,  
hold out your hands in blessing, saying,  
"Can you see what I am offering you?  
Just my empty, wanting hands, waiting  
to squeeze your doubt into diamonds."



# The Amazing Unicolor Jumpsuit

ERIC DONOVAN

---

Orange was always a part of Paul's wardrobe, but it wasn't until he got the jumpsuit that people started talking. He always wore the color. It was just that now, Paul fully engulfed himself in the glowing tones.

Although they knew he was just a young boy, everyone in town thought Paul was slowly grooming himself into the town crazy. But it turned out that Paul just really liked the color. He always had.

It all began in kindergarten gym class. There were thirteen students in his class that year, and for the game on this particular day, the class was to be broken into six teams of two, with one left over. Each would also choose a color for their team, and that would determine what order they played in, because it went according to the color spectrum: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. As the students began to pick their teammates, Paul was left out, but so was the color orange. As he stood on top of the orange pad designating his one-man team as the orange team, he began to relate with orange, seeing it as different, like him.

That day, Paul went up against each team in this game, a hybrid of dodge ball and wall ball, in which the players had to throw larger balls against a wall and hit the other players while remaining stationary. First up came red, then yellow, green, blue, indigo, and finally violet, and despite the odds, Paul defeated each team by himself. While he thought his victory would make him look cool in front of the other children, it turned out that he was very wrong. Instead, the children got angry with Paul for beating all of them, and from that day on, they became to tell him that he had only won because he was a freak and had "freak abilities."

For the remainder of the school year, Paul would continually beat the children at various games. It was not because he was athletically better than anyone, but more so because Paul thought out each game strategically, using his natural intellect to trump the other children. Although his kindergarten gym class success stories were frequent, Paul still did not connect with the other children. Instead of the children

Phailing him as a triumphant class champion, they simply continued to pick on Paul and say that only freaks could be that good in gym class.

By the end of the year, Paul had given up, realizing that no matter what he did, it seemed the children would never accept him. It seemed he was never going to win their acceptance, no matter how many times he won in gym class. But it was ok now, because he wasn't alone.

Throughout that year, Paul had grown accustomed to being the one-man orange team, up against anyone and everyone. Orange became, throughout that year, more than just the color assigned to be his team but also a companion. He began to see that orange was dependable, a charm that would aid him in his victories. He saw that with orange, he could do anything that he wanted. It grew to be more than just a color but almost like a person, his little sidekick that, despite what the other kid called his "freak abilities", was always there for him. From here, his obsession with the color would only grow, but it wasn't until second grade that he started stealing it.

At recess one afternoon, Paul snuck into the teacher's art supply closet and stole every orange crayon he could get his hands on. He stole all of the markers, leaves of construction paper, and even the highlighters adorned with the bright color. And it only got worse as the years went on. But after the crayon incident, Paul always made sure to take the color orange out of every room he came across.

Now, just days shy of his twelfth birthday, Paul stood in the middle of his cul-de-sac, dressed in the brilliantly orange jumpsuit. Although the street was usually brimming with excitement from all of the children at play, when Paul had come out, the noise ceased, as it always did. The children sat quietly on their lawns, watching and waiting for Paul to make a move. But he never came near any of them. Paul knew he didn't belong there with them. He had no friends, nor did he really try after his experiences in kindergarten, but Paul accepted that.

The closest thing Paul had to a friend was a girl named Liv, but even she didn't say much to him. Often, in fact, he would see her staring and smiling from afar, hiding in the shadows. At times, on his way home, he would hear footsteps behind him, and sure enough, there was Liv, hiding behind a tree. And she would always be wearing her black sweatshirt, with the hood tightly squeezed over the top of her head. Paul always used to wonder if she even had hair.

Nonetheless, she never actually spoke to him. At best, she would



Leave him weird little notes, or more like little fragments of tissues or napkins that said 'Hi!' or had a smiley face on them. Paul always wanted to talk to her, but she always got nervous and ran away. She did that with most people. In fact, the only times he had ever heard her speak were when other kids were getting picked on in the schoolyard. She would always run right over to the victim, to make sure they were all right. Paul always thought this was really kind of Liv, but even after he would try to tell her that, she still ran away nervously.

He never understood why, because he had always been so nice to her. But that was often the reaction Paul got from people: he would smile and they would step back and stare. Because of this, Paul learned to work by himself, and over time, he grew comfortable living the solo life.

Eventually, Paul began to prefer being a loner. He always figured that, alone, he could get so much more done. And plus, with orange always around, he had something he knew would always be there for him.

But even though Paul set his social priorities low, he dreamed of achieving bigger things and going off to better places where he could be like the people he read so much about in his favorite stories and comics, like Peter Parker, who once had been just like Paul, a misunderstood loner who became a superhero. Paul always loved these kinds of stories, and he always tried to act them out whenever possible. This was his way of escape and there were always two places where he could do this. He could, of course, turn to his books, where imagination would place him within the story and he could fight right alongside the heroes he idolized. But there was also the forest, where Paul went every day.

The Woods, as Paul called his forest, was a place Paul could be free, free from the eyes and stares, free from everything that bothered him. The Woods was where Paul was happiest, where he could be anything and anyone he wanted to be. No eyes, no stares. It was just Paul and his world.

Upon entering the thick concentration of foliage, Paul always knew exactly where to go. It was a quarter-mile east, then 382 paces north. He followed this same route everyday, and it was now easier to follow, as his feet were starting to make permanent indentations into the earth. Once Paul hit the Ents, those trees that reminded him of a certain fantasy story he loved, he knew he was where he wanted to

be, for it was just past these mythical tree-like creatures that the forest suddenly opened up into a small, yet magnificent clearing.

Every day, when Paul came upon this clearing, his face always lit up. This was his world, where he could be who he was and no one could judge him. There were no children staring him down. It was just him and his favorite color, and orange was certainly not to be missed. The clearing was filled with the bright color, with the products of Paul's years of stealing filling the area. The trees were adorned with various orange markings, paintings of different words or pictures on each. The ground had paths laid out, made of orange blankets, tarps, and other citrus tinged materials. Bright orange leaves of paper even dangled from some of the lower branches Paul could reach, and when the light hit this clearing just right, Paul truly was in a world all his own.

Over the years, Paul had put his heart and soul into making this place his "orange fortress of solitude," as he called it, and everyday he would have another idea of how to make it brighter and more alive. Orange was more than just a color to him, it was his way of being who he was, and in the clearing, no one could judge him. No one could see him. Orange was his friend, ever bright and ever with him.

But in recent weeks, the smile that appeared on Paul's face had begun to disappear.

After acquiring the bright orange jumpsuit from a favorite thrift store, Paul had finally achieved a goal he had set out long ago to achieve. Paul had now become a part of the orange world he had so proudly created. For once, he felt like he could directly connect with the lonely color he had met all those years ago in kindergarten. He could become one with it.

For a few short weeks, Paul had left this world and traveled far and wide in the world of orange, playing with the color, showing it all the stories he loved so much. One day he was in Mount Doom, and the next, Paul would be in Willy Wonka's factory, in a new room he had created himself, where all they made were orange candies. He went on for days like this, exploring all of the different worlds he'd read about that would fit into his orange masterpiece. He loved every minute of it because it combined his two favorite things, his love for orange and his favorite stories. For weeks, Paul was at his happiest, with orange and with the woods. But that all stopped when Paul came to a stunning revelation.

In one of his adventures, he became an astronaut on Mars. As he began to search the planet for discoveries and new findings, he heard



┌ a crunching of leaves and the sound of voices in the distance. But ┐  
Paul continued to play in his world. As he looked under rocks, muttering various things to someone named "Houston," the voices grew louder and seemed to come from just feet away.

"What are you doing?" said Pat, a kid from Paul's class, "Why are you talkin' to yourself? Yo, guys, this kid's talkin' to himself!" Three other children popped out from behind the trees, all laughing at Paul. "What are you doing, freak? Tell us! C'mon, we won't make fun of you," said Pat. The other kids nodded in agreement.

Although Paul suspected something was up, he hoped for the best and said, "I'm playing on the planet Mars, looking for life. Want to join me?"

"So...that's what you do down here?" Pat asked.

Paul nodded.

"Oh, my God! You are a freak! The only life you're gonna find here is your own, loser!" Pat said. Pat looked to the other children, who were also laughing and pointing at Paul. "Guys, let's go before the Oompa-Loompa does anything crazy!"

As the boys left the woods, laughing, Paul remained there alone, on the verge of tears. Although he had been shunned all these years, no one had ever said anything this mean to him. Really, they just never said anything at all. But that was better than being called a "freak" and "loser."

"Why couldn't people just understand me?" Paul thought. As he stood there in silence, he heard a rustling and saw Pat turning back around at the top of the hill.

"Oh, yea, one more thing. Mars is called the red planet. Wrong color, idiot!" Pat yelled, and then he turned around and left. But the damage had been done.

Paul stood in the bright, open clearing, and all that he had built over all this time didn't seem to matter anymore. As he looked around at the orange spectacle, the brightness of the color could not ignite the fire that had gone out within his heart. He no longer found the color orange appealing, but rather, as something that had pushed him away from everyone around him. Paul now saw his only friend as the reason he had no others.

Pat's words had hit Paul deeply. Orange always seemed to be a color of limitless possibilities, but today, orange proved to be something that drove others away. 'Was this why everyone hated me?' Paul

thought.

At the end of the school day, Paul proceeded home, trying to understand the day's events. 'Why had everything gone so wrong?' he thought. As Paul sat alone in his room, he began to realize that no matter what, people weren't going to understand him. Now that orange was gone, Paul was alone and, no matter what happened, Paul was never going to be any different. But, he just hadn't been able to see that before.

He had left the woods behind, the only place where he felt understood. And it was all his fault.

As he continued to think about the forest, he felt a rush of guilt come upon him. Why had he so easily abandoned the only thing that brought him joy? Was this really the end of his happiness? Would orange take him back? As absurd thoughts continued to run through Paul's head, he became more and more convinced that he had severed all ties to orange. There was just nothing he thought that could connect them once again.

Then, he remembered the jumpsuit. As fast as he could, Paul ran to his backyard. He searched the grass, searched the tool shed, searched the back room where his mother sometimes laid out his clothing in nice clean folds. He even checked his drawers, hoping that by some rare chance his jumpsuit had found its way safely back into his room, but Paul found no jumpsuit.

He began to panic, and rationalization began to settle in. I must have left it in the forest. There's no way I lost it, Paul thought. Fear welled up inside him and, for the first time in his life, Paul cried.

He had never cried as a child, not when he scraped his knee at the carnival or even when his dog, Boba, died. But today, Paul finally felt sad inside and he felt defeated. He realized that he was the reason his only friend was gone. But, being the do-it-yourself type he had always been, Paul quickly determined he would also be the reason this whole situation would get figured out. So, he went to the only place he could think of.

As he entered the clearing, rays of sunlight shone down on the orange landscape and the clearing was as radiant as ever. This normally would have been a wonderful day in Paul's world, but today, it did not seem to be so. There was no jumpsuit there, and that is when Paul's heart sank. At that moment, Paul felt completely alone.

Just as he began to think that there was nothing left, that he had



ruined all chances at happiness, Paul heard a vaguely familiar voice.

"Paul," a girl's voice softly called from across the clearing, so soft that Paul could barely make out his own name. He turned around, and just across the way stood Liv, holding the orange jumpsuit.

"I found this hanging on the fence by your house," Liv said, "I tried to return it, but your mom said you'd gone to bed. This was the only place I thought I would find you," Liv said. "I actually followed you down here, but you're always in your own little world, so I guess you didn't see me trying to catch up. Oh, and don't worry about yesterday, I know it was a rough time for you. I've been there myself so many times."

Paul smiled and walked toward Liv, and Liv smiled right back.

"So this is why you love this place so much? I always see you come down here, but I never get a good enough look from up on the hill. It's amazing," Liv said, as she pulled the hood down from her head. "Do you mind if I stay?"

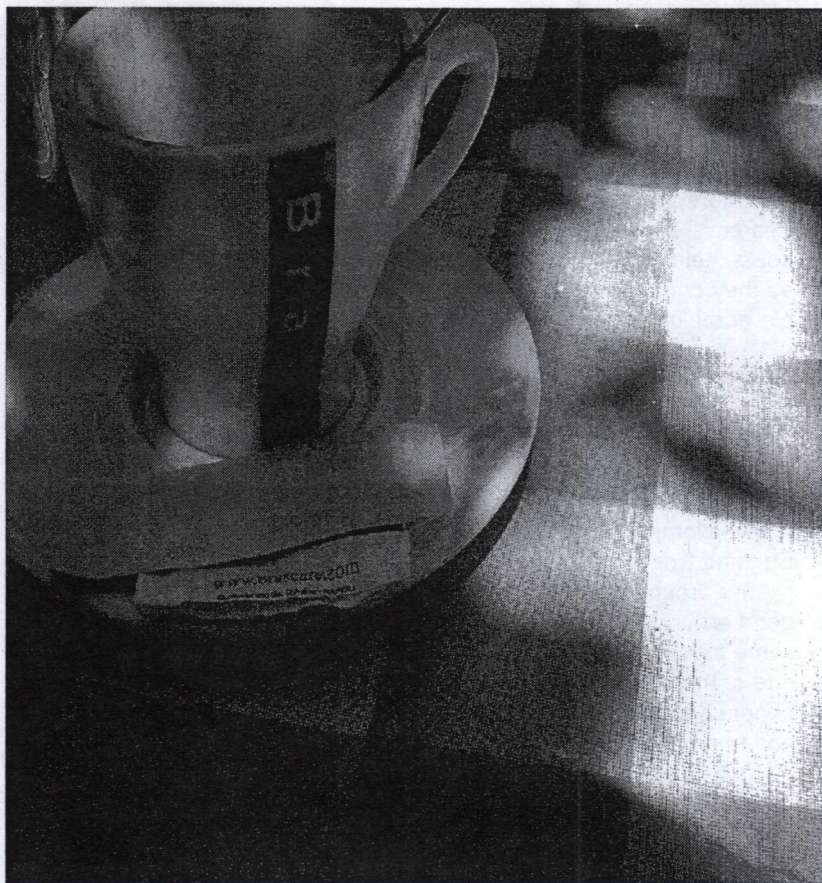
With those words, Paul saw her in a way he had never seen her before. It was not just in the way she acted, but Paul realized, she looked different, too.

Two sets of eyes, stared at one another, in the bright clearing. Liv's hair was shining, bright orange, and it fit in just right.

# A Midsummer□s Lunch

LAUREN BALLIET

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# Nostos

JOHN KRALL

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## I.

When I stepped onto the platform it was early, and the train had not yet arrived, so I picked out an empty bench near the railings and sat down to wait.

The clouds hung low overhead and the sky looked like one thick streak of gray paint. It was raining, but not hard. The rain felt cool and pleasant, and I did not need a rain coat or umbrella. The station platform was wet and gray with a broad yellow line at the edge of the platform where the doors would open up. It was a quarter after twelve and more people came up the platform steps as the arrival time grew nearer. People in groups huddled about in yellow and white rain coats, held onto each other, and grabbed the railings to avoid slipping as they came up the steps. Soon the whole platform was full of people and I knew that the train would arrive soon.

There were dozens of people and despite the weather, everyone looked very cheerful and glad to be going. Leaving and returning always made people cheerful; it is only staying that makes people anxious and unpleasant. Sitting there watching them, I imagined some of the people bound for far off places: Pittsburgh, St. Paul, maybe even the sunny beaches of California. Far away from the New England snow. Not that there was anything particularly wrong with New England...or snow. Anywhere gets boring if you stay for too long.

After around five more minutes of waiting, I saw the train turning the bend around the tracks, and it gradually pulled in in front of us and came to a stop. A man wearing a dry black uniform came out from one of the passenger cars and proceeded to open doors and usher people on. It was very loud with all the people shouting and talking, and the usher had to blow his whistle more than once. I got up with my two bags and took a place in a line behind a plump woman who held the hand of a frail, timid looking girl. The line moved rapidly and eventually I was through the doors and down the aisle searching for a seat.

I found an empty one by a window and put my luggage into the

upper compartments. It was a nice train, with thick, red patterned carpet and the seats were soft and warm. The seats began filling quickly, and soon there were only one or two empty ones left in my car. An older couple, a man with a thin beard and a thin head of hair and a plain looking woman in a green blouse, came into the aisle and went to sit on the two empty seats beside me, if I didn't mind. I didn't. Her name was Martha, and her husband was called Francis.

"Are you traveling all by yourself?" the woman asked after they became situated.

"Yes. I'm going home for winter break," I said.

"What business brought you to New England?" the balding man asked, leaning over his wife. "If you don't mind me asking."

"I was at school."

"Oh. That's marvelous. What school do you attend?"

"Dartmouth."

"Ah, Dartmouth. Fine school." His mouth hung open for a moment as if lost in thought.

"*Vox clamantis in deserto. The voice of one crying in the wilderness.*"

He looked at me with a smile, as if he wanted my approval, so I did my best.

"Ah. Yes. That's right."

The woman turned her eyes away from the shifting scenery of the window and focused on me. "Oh, New England is so beautiful in the winter, isn't it, Joseph?" I agreed. "Yes. Very cold, but very beautiful."

I split my attention between their conversation and the window. The train had started a while back and the vibration of the wheels and track went through my body. Outside beyond the tracks, the plain sloped down sharply and the snow was piled up evenly and untouched so that the landscape and sky blended in one straight line of white and gray. Eventually the plain leveled out and we went through a forest of oaks and firs with patches of green still showing through the snow. The train sped through and the trees passed by rapidly and looking at them made me nauseous. Beyond were the white cliffs of the Appalachians and focusing on the mountains was calming. The cliffs were beautiful and seemed to cut up through the sky like arrow heads, all white and gray.

Martha and the balding man Francis had apparently given up talking to me and were now engaged with each other, although the conversa-



tion looked like it was dwindling. Another man in a dry, black suit came into our car, this one different than the one outside with the whistle, and began going down the aisle collecting tickets. I had my ticket ready, and when he reached me, I leaned over the older couple and put the ticket into his hand.

I leaned my head against the window and the vibration of the train was even stronger but it was more comforting than irritating, and I kept watch outside the train at the shifting image of trees, snow, and the gray mountain heads. After a while the rest of the train was silent and I fell asleep.

## II.

It was around 4:30 when I reached Philadelphia and it made me think about how long tracts of time can be lost in what seem like mere moments, and how when it is morning and you are both half asleep and awake how a few minutes can be stretched into what feels like hours, how all the deserts of the world can be reduced to the size of a particle of sand when viewed from space. And it seemed to me that the I that had existed before that period – that period between the lines when I had been asleep – emerged a being altogether different when I awoke, as if for those few hours I had actually vanished from existence, unconscious of the world and the world unconscious of me.

The train had emptied out by the time we were in the city and I was the only one in the car. When the train reached my stop I got up out of the seat and took the two luggage bags from the upper compartment and made my way up the aisle and off the train.

Outside it was still dreary, as it had been in Hanover, and the clouds were still thick and gray, but with the sun illuminating the clouds from behind and they were bright black and gray like smoke and lights in old black and white movies. It was not raining, but it was cold and the platform steps were icy and wet.

I crossed the parking lot and saw my father leaning patiently against the clean white trunk of the car, the car supporting him and holding him up. As I approached him he stood up on his own weight and his eyes lit up, looking like two large, brown dirt clods all delighted and optimistic.

I dropped my bags in front of him, exchanged a hand shake and a hug and put the two bags in the trunk next to some old newspapers and wrapped up ads and coupons. I had not been in the car for

months and when I got in it felt like a step backwards in some ways, a temporary defeat, like Napoleon's exile to Elba before the Hundred Days, but it also felt like a return to structure, with the familiar smell of newspapers and the way my father's shoes smelled in particular, and the dirt stains on the floor in the same spots as when I left it.

"So how is it living on your own?"

Have I just been rolling my boulder up this hill, night after night lying awake in wonderment and fickle inspiration, rising out of bed at an instant to return to write more as the ideas come – a spring that comes to spout as it wills, and we need merely be there to capture it. A man is born. A man goes out into the world. And a man returns? For what? To die? Like Shakespeare returning to Stratford to retire in his old age. Has all my effort been pushed to its highest extent? Is all rolling back down to the base of the hill in this car? What have I said?

"You were saying how the classes are good and your room mates are nice."

"Oh, yes. It sure is something."

I leaned my face up against the window and saw the streets and lawns and thick, staple-marked telephone poles drift past slowly as the car turned onto the boulevard and picked up speed. Most of the trees on the divider of the boulevard were barren and dead except for a few evergreens and shrubs which were the only green in the city. The street lights were on early because it was winter, but it was still light out and the light of the street lights was lost out among the natural light of the sun filtered through the clouds.

"How is it with all the ladies?"

"Good, Dad. It's different than high school."

"It sure was when I was at college." He was silent for a while but seemed discontent and needed to continue the conversation.

"Megan is back home on break too, by the way."

Megan had long, dark brown hair that was wavy and fine and two large green eyes like opulent jewels. She lived a street down from my old house and I can recall walking down sun drenched streets, especially during the fall when the leaves would change to dappled shades of reds and yellows and oranges, and we would escape the city streets and into the parks and green. The past is constantly retreading behind us – impossible to catch, only to recall. Saudade.

"Oh? That's interesting."

There was silence in the car after this, my father presumably finished with his attempts at conversation.



When we reached the house, I got out of the car and got my bags out of the trunk. I walked up the driveway to the house. The air was cold and it was twilight with the clouds now a deep gray but dispersing in areas so that the night might be a clear one. The driveway had not been shoveled except for where the car was parked and where to walk, so the snow was piled up on the grass and along the cement and looked icy and dirty from the street. The front lawns snow ran off in at an even level into the back yard's snow like a tributary feeding a larger body of water.

I walked up onto the porch, hearing my feet make that familiar knocking noise when they stepped on wood, and opened the screen door into the kitchen. There was a smell of pork and beans and a few other vegetables that got lost up in the rest of the smells that hung in the air and caught me as I walked through the door and immediately I felt like I was home and remembered the hot summer nights when it was still bright out at 7 pm and when we would eat early to have the rest of the day free to do whatever and the whole house, even from upstairs in my room would smell like dinner and I would be anxious to leave whatever I was reading aside and go down to eat.

Mother turned from the pots and the oven and a smile grew up in her face once she saw me in the doorway. I dropped the bags once more near the kitchen table to reciprocate her affection and she stuck out her hands to feel my face between them. Like Abraham recognizing my voice and feeling my face. But it would take more than one like this to recognize me.

"Welcome back! Where's your father?"

I went to answer but he came in behind me through the screen door and I didn't have to say anything. Mother looked to inquire of me further but I excused myself and took my two bags upstairs to my old room.

The room smelled like an old storage closet and seemed dreadfully under lit. There was a stale smell of polish and it disturbed my nostrils and made me nauseous to think about. I put the two bags down on the bed. The bed had fresh sheets and the mattress conformed to me as I sat down at the foot of the bed.

Everything seemed just as I had left it. The bookshelf was in the corner, and still had a few books in it that I had not taken with me to school. It was gathering dust and had not been touched since I left.

The television directly in front of me was less dusty than the bookshelf and it was apparent that my room had been used while I was away and the things on my dresser had been moved about and displaced. The walls were a dull green like the snot green sea. It was dark outside and the only light in the room was a small vintage looking lamp on my desk, which looked like it needed a new bulb.

There was nothing for me to do in the room so I went down stairs to see how dinner was coming. It was almost done. I got out three plates from the cupboard and put them on the table in the correct spots, and poured myself a glass of cold iced tea from the refrigerator. I sat down in my seat and took a drink.

#### IV.

*[Interior] A traditionally upholstered kitchen with screen door to porch and exit to living room. There is a kitchen table with checkered white and blue table cloth and three plates and sets of utensils are on the table. Diana [Mother] stands at oven, arranging pots and pans and removing pork-chops from stove. Joseph sits at table with glass of iced tea, drinking.*

- DIANA: So how are you liking it so far? How  
are your roommates?
- JOSEPH: It's good mom. They're fine, somewhat loud, but fine.
- MOM: That's great. What were their names again?
- JOSEPH: Bill and Nick, Mom.
- MOM: Ah, yes. You said they were loud?
- JOSEPH: Yes.
- MOM: Oh yeah? What makes you say that?
- JOSEPH: I don't know, just that the way they behave is different  
than me, that's all. It's nothing special.
- MOM: I know. How are all your classes? Are your profes  
sors nice?
- JOSEPH: Yeah, Mom. It's all very different, but great.
- MOM: Meet anyone?

*Joseph takes a drink slowly.*

- JOSEPH: You know how those things are, I guess. I haven't  
really though.



Enter Edward [Father] from porch rubbing hands together. Edward goes to the sink and washes his hands.

EDWARD: Did I tell you I had the boat fixed up, Joe?  
JOE: You might have mentioned it.  
EDWARD: Yes. Well, it's fixed.  
MOM: I was just asking Joseph if he met someone, dear.  
DEAR: Oh.  
JOSEPH: I know, Mom.  
MOM: Did I mention Megan was home too?  
JOSEPH: I know, Mom.  
MOM: Oh, ok.

*Silence. Dinner is served, a meal consisting of tender-cooked pork chops, with baked beans, mashed potatoes and diced carrots. The bowls are steaming hot.*

DEAR: It looks delicious, Diana.  
DIANA: Thank you.

*They dish out the food, each individually, and begin eating.*

DIANA: Did I tell you I saw Jeff and Tom at the market the other day, Joe?  
JOE: No you didn't. How are they?  
DIANA: Good. They are both going to school close to home. They asked about you.  
JOE: Oh? And what did you tell them?  
DIANA: That you were at Dartmouth and that you were doing very well.  
JOE: That's good.  
DEAR: They should be around tonight. Why don't you give them a call to go out?  
JOE: I just may, Dad.  
DIANA: Is there anything wrong?  
JOE: No. Why should there be?  
DAD: You aren't saying much.  
JOE [laughing]: What do you want? I'm answering all your questions.

DAD: Yes, but...  
DIANA: You can tell us if something's wrong.  
You know that, right?  
JOE: Yeah, of course. And I will.  
DIANA: Good.

V.

After dinner I helped with the dishes and then went out of the house and onto the porch. I rested my elbows against the cold, metal lattice and smoked a cigarette. and onto the porch. I rested my elbows against the cold, metal lattice and smoked a cigarette.

Down the street, to my left, about a block, there was a party and I could hear loud talking and laughing. It was still early, maybe about 6, and many of the houses on my block still had their lights on in the living rooms.

I heard the screen door open behind me, and my father stepped out onto the porch. He adjusted the wicker chair for a minute, sat down, and folded his arms.

"When did you start smoking?"

"I can't be sure," I said without turning.

"You really should cut that out. It's really not good for you and all it does is cost you money. Or should I say our money."

I shrugged without taking my eyes off the lawn. It was still cold, but the clouds had departed and the night was clear and bright and the snow no longer blended evenly with the sky. There were patches of grass sticking up on the sidewalk in front of the large drifts of snow piled up when the plows did the street.

I started down the steps and made my way carefully on the ice down the driveway. I made it to the sidewalk.

"Where are you off to anyway?" my father asked from behind.

"I went out to the hazel wood," I smiled,

"Because there was a fire in my head."

I stepped delicately over the snow bank off the sidewalk and into the middle of the street, heading towards where the noise was coming from. My head ached and my throat burned. I did not know if my father had said anything else.

A car alarm went off in the distance. The noise reverberated off the houses, the steel gratings and rusted metal awnings, the fire hydrants, and the telephone polls, and Edward sat in a wicker chair, and Joseph pressed onward to nowhere, each in their ordered place. The alarm did not die off slowly, nor did it spread itself out across the neighbor-



hood until the last note sounded. It stopped immediately and in that moment it was forgotten, as if it had never sounded.

The thick, brick houses of the neighborhood sat in silent stillness, and the cloudless skies and pale, still-dim stars overhead reciprocated in silent recognition.

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## Streetlight Garden

REBECCA DOBRZYNSKI

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# The Storm

HAYLEY BOYLE

---

I'm sitting on my bathroom floor.

I'm looking up at the ceiling. It's leaking.

Drip

drip

drip

I can see little splashes every time a water droplet hits the counter.

Then I can feel, ever so lightly, a sprinkling on my face.

There's a sharp flash of lightning. A loud crack of thunder.

My heart skips a beat.

My stomach is filled with butterflies.

One mississippi. Two mississippi. Three mississippi.

Flash. Crack.

Thunder, lightning.

I feel happy.

Dear God,

I love when you go bowling with the angels.

Please, never stop.

Make sure Daddy scores well.

Amen.



# Not a Proper Elegy

CARA CONOCER

---

It's the changes that hurt the most  
My dad says—said—this  
My dad likes—liked—that  
I keep forgetting  
And it keeps coming back

Maybe I did something wrong  
Maybe I should have been more cheerful on the phone  
There's so much left unsaid  
Especially from that day  
When I held your hand and it turned ice cold  
While the monitor lines went all straight

I wish I could write you a proper elegy  
But I'm wordless and worthless right now  
Forgive me  
Forgive me  
Forgive me  
There wasn't enough time...

It's not right to wonder why, is it?  
I will not question. I have to accept it.  
You're whole but empty now  
Still my darling daddy with a potty mouth  
The best man I'll ever know

My heart is aching in a way I've never felt before  
It's still surreal  
Until I see the box  
Disappear beneath the crust of cold December earth

I miss you.

# Lyra

CHRISTINE KEELY

---

There are names I do not  
remember: the flush shade of fingernail;  
the missing girl, six years, found  
pressed into an unflowered grave;  
the cluster of stars  
I punch into a postcard. I take your  
freckles and rename them stars.  
Do not get scared when I do not  
remember the rest.

In December I am on the wrong side  
of the world, or looking into  
the wrong sky. I cannot  
find the trio of birds,  
the third renamed a lyre.  
You tell me, if I want it enough,  
I will wake kissed – I find a freckle  
now, on my lip.



# Chinese Food

HAYLEY BOYLE

---

Chinese food tastes best on nights like these  
Where I'm cramming my brain  
And hoping to God that I retain it all  
Since tomorrow I'll be wracking my mind  
To recall all the ins and outs, the ups and downs.

And chai tea with ice cubes is delightful  
Mainly for the caffeine  
But somewhat for the rush of goose bumps  
That form across my skin when my brain freezes  
Which I hope it won't do in the morning.

But by the early hours of the morning  
The Chinese food needs reheating  
The ice cubes have melted into the chai tea  
And I am rubbing my eyes every fifteen seconds  
In order to keep from falling asleep.

It is important though to learn the material  
Although sleep ranks high up there as well  
But sometimes the thought of a grade  
Is enough to keep a person awake  
To study the mysteries of considerably "useful" information.

# Better State

KIMBERLY A. LEDGISTER

She sleeps. Her eyes flicker in the night. Her chest rises and falls. A gust of cold wind shocks her to awaken. Hands rub a sweaty face. Creases mark a cheek, a pillow the culprit. Her hair a mess. Thick. Black. The breeze continues to blow. The cold chill felt even more by damp sheets. It's nice. Bent legs collapse, and are swung around to face the window. Slippers, fuzzy, thick, and firm await. Drunkenly she makes her way to the bathroom. Facing herself. Eyes are smeared with black. Red arteries become apparent around the pupil. Hands find support around the sink, filled with dirty water. Splashes. Splashes. Rub it off.

Maybe I can erase tonight. Splash. Rub. Fresh water runs, warm. Splash. Eyes meet one another in the mirror. Tears are forming. I hate this. I hate you. The razor rests upon the basin. Ah, how cool the wind is. How slowly do the branches sway as they cast shadows on the bed, floor, sill. Blankly she stares at the images. The razor is cold. The razor. It's sharp. Sitting upon a toilet. Bent hands serve as rest to a head heavy with fear, anger, insecurities. Her face marked with tears. Flashes. Her mind remembers what her numb state cannot seem to. Power. She feels him. Eyes meet. She screams. Screams. It hurts. In her mind she deserves it. Power. Grasping him. Pulling. She blinks. The razor falls. A tear falls. She picks up the razor. Her foot finds rest against the seat. A thin soft slice into her flesh. Droplets of blood escape. She catches them and to her mouth she places them. The wind howls in the room. A knock. She drops the razor once more. A knock. Knock. Knock. Soapy water washes. Stings. Band-Aid, slippers, robe. She walks to the door. He stands. Bags at his side. Shock. Silence. He enters. She grabs his bags and places them beside the couch. Jacket removed. Steps. Kitchen. Food. They find solitude. Rest. Sitting adjacent on the edge of the bed. His hands are clasped, clammy, and moving. You lied. Cheated. Her head bows. I love you though. Silence. The mood is ruined. I'm sorry. Apologies! A hand touches another. She sleeps. Her eyes flicker. The sheets damp. His body. Hers. Sleeping. The ceiling a canvas. Images? They become shadows as he moves. There are no more mornings now. There never will be.



The sunsets are reserved for those who awaken to the days beckoning. Bodies moving. Randomness. Music plays. He finds himself in the bathroom. Vanity stares back while humility resides. He cannot help it. She smokes as he steps out. The cigarette is dropped, smashed. Bathroom hers. Searches. He searches for his shoes, slippers. A box he finds. Notebooks are filled with accounts. I cut myself again. My uncle touched me. Maybe I should cut my wrists. Confusion. Why hadn't she related her woes? Surfacing from the bathroom. Glances. Stares. Anger. She finally breaks.

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## Dactylography

CHRISTINE KEELY

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We call some things ours  
like a moon might be, tied to its other  
and grows nightly  
around. To Mars, I do not  
recall, but Earthly:  
I am tied by my hips  
to your fingerprints –  
Burn them hot into my skin.

They are only ours  
though the way I am yours  
by a name and a pattern  
of curls.

# That Test

ROBERT O'BRIEN

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Fall, 1966.

I'm a junior, carrying a pretty cool GPA in French Lit, minor in German. (No idea what to do with either. But that's another story.)

Time to choose an elective or two. Why not Political Science? I don't know, or have forgotten, what makes the country tick (knew a lot more about this in grade-school civics). The nation seems to be missing a lot of beats in Southeast Asia. I've got a high-school buddy there. (He would never come back.) I was draft code 3A — college boy, draft-exempt. Profs nationwide started inflating grades to keep guys like me out of it.

Except for Prof X — whose name still escapes me.

He was impersonal, intimidating, precise. Did you miss an A by a couple of decimal points? Too bad, that's a B. That put me off, but I rolled with it.

Until the morning of his final exam. I'm a commuter (we were a majority then). Snowtime on the Schuylkill Expressway. Lots of smoke-grey slush splattering the windshield of my rod-knocked 57 Ford.

I've got newly retreaded tires, armed with chains. But the links don't prevent a flat, somewhere around Girard Avenue. Left front tire. It's gonna get messy fixing it.

Narrow shoulder. PTC bus whizzes by. The jack works fine. But the road-spray works a number on my clothes — and my mind.

But hey, off Belfield, coming north on 20th, small miracle. Parking spot close to Wister, whose steps I scale with speed. Ready to plead my case — extra time for the final.



Door closed. Knock knock. Explanation offered. Evidence apparent.

Sorry. No exceptions. You've still got 20 minutes. The Blue Books are over there. Pulled a C. Made a difference on the diploma's Latin "laudes". It still hangs in my den. No "summa". No "magna". But at least a "cum".

November, 2008.

4:30 am. Bolt from troubled sleep. I look around the bedroom, searching for a lug nut buried somewhere in Schuylkill Expressway slush.

## I Don't Dream Here

SEAN ELLIS

I am up late staring and I see  
The cracked walls that surround me  
Nothing about this place has anything I like  
The poetry of life has fled

I walk and I trip  
I know how much shit you can fit into a tiny room  
There is barely enough room for me to breath  
I curl onto my bed and try to sleep

The phone rings and rings  
No, I am not coming into work today  
I will sit in this room and waste my time  
The warm air outside freezes me

The dreams you see on TV could be true  
I would never know if they were  
I don't dream here, not anymore  
I don't live, I just exist

# E.M.

REBECCA DOBRZYNSKI

---

I see you in the dancing leaves  
that jump across my path  
as I make my way down the walk.  
But they have nothing of your life,  
your sweetly pleasing insanity,  
your wondrous, lovely spontaneity,  
and not a hint of your smiling face.  
Their skittering across pavement  
is hardly as enchanting  
as your silly stories  
or amusing antics.  
For a moment I wonder  
what the leaves look like where you are.  
For a moment it strikes me  
that I know nothing  
of what you're doing right now,  
and that the last time I spoke to you  
was probably before the leaves fell.  
And I miss your voice and your affection,  
and I know I should call you,  
but I never think of it when I have the time.

I'm not sure what it is  
about the leaves on this of all days,  
but today I have been reminded of you  
with every tread of my footsteps.  
I mail you a leaf, and I hope you understand.



# Daughter to Mother

HAYLEY BOYLE

---

To listen to your sweet lullaby  
To rest my heavy head on your breast  
To close my eyes in security  
To be able to sleep now and rest

To laugh with loud and hearty giggles  
To feel your warm breath on my tummy  
To squeal as you blow me raspberries  
To snort since there's nothing more funny

To sit eagerly at the table  
To wait for chocolate chips to melt  
To eat pancakes this Sunday morning  
To watch as Daddy loosens his belt

To mimic you as you're gardening  
To take a brown shovel and dig deep  
To plant such a beautiful garden  
To breathe in the aromas you reap

To cry in your arms about high school  
To have you understand what I say  
To let you stroke my head lovingly  
To know everything will be okay

To grow up with you as my mother  
To make mistakes and argue sometimes  
To talk about everything in life  
To realize we grow closer with time

This is love.  
This is love.

# A Pastor Afterward

CHRIS GROSSO

---

He'd died. His body  
landed on the sidewalk  
in front of the dry cleaners.  
Fell some four stories  
& landed like cherry pie  
thrown out of a window.

We don't know if he  
jumped or was pushed.

I picked up his day-planner  
from the scene  
near his body  
and held it as gingerly as one holds  
an original Guttenberg bible.

Thumbed through his  
schedule w/ prayerful hands  
and his appointments  
Lazarus themselves  
from the dated pages:

a wedding Saturday  
a baptism Sunday  
a divorce Monday  
pick-up dry cleaning on Tuesday.

Today is Tuesday. His body  
landed on the sidewalk  
in front of the dry cleaners.

His last sermon was on  
accident versus providence.

We don't know if he  
jumped or was pushed.



# Yellow Dandelions

HAYLEY BOYLE

---

I can't tell whether to love you more  
Or love you less,  
Would cause me more pain.

But lying here in this field  
Strewn with yellow dandelions and the smell of spring  
Makes me think that maybe  
If I ignore it and  
Simply lie here for a while  
I will grow older than I am now  
And forget that I ever loved you to begin with.

Everything will grow older with me  
And everything will forget the love  
That I hold in the secret depths of my heart.  
Even the dandelions will come to pass from yellow  
To white and feathery,  
And I will wish upon one, or two, or even a dozen,  
That forgotten love is not love in vain.  
I will blow and death will float across the field and land and life will  
begin again.

But what it all comes down to  
Is the fact that these yellow dandelions  
Are still so young—  
Just as I am and  
Just as you are—  
And I still remember the love I have for you.

To grow up and grow old  
Would only cause the yellow to  
Turn white and feathery  
And then to float away because, naturally,

That is what dandelions do.  
And someday that is what we will do, too.

Only, there will be no one there  
To make a wish as we move from life into death.  
That is, unless we meet another  
Who will tolerate our insecurities and the hell we raise  
Our white and feathery seeds  
Will not float away and land again and bring forth more yellow dandelions.

Instead our white and feathery seeds  
Will stay in our abandoned bodies  
And our memories will pass on from present into past  
And the love I had for you will be forgotten.

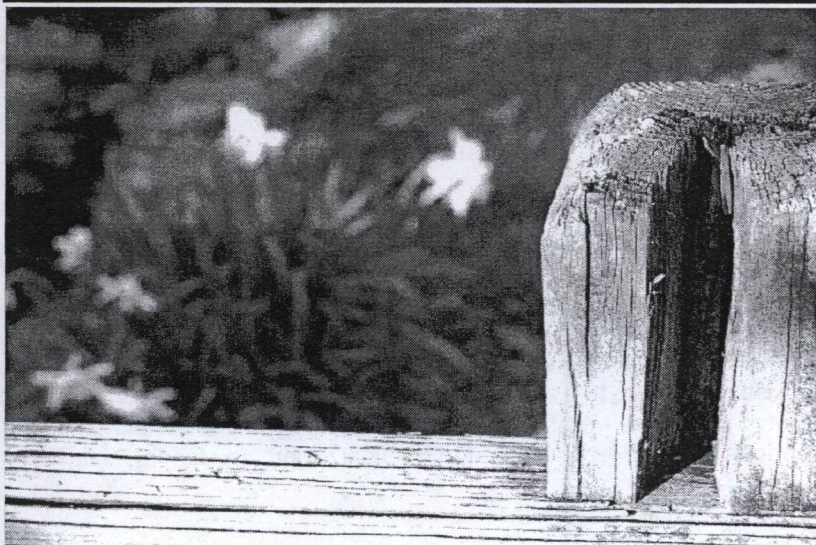
There will be no wish for us!

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## Teahouse Bridge

REBECCA DOBRZYNSKI

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# The Docks

JONATHAN JULIANO

The wind leaves white wisps against a blue sky.  
Cloud remnants; physical evidence trying to prove  
The wind's existence.  
Sitting on the dock of a bay I don't feel much like  
Soul singing.

The water mirrors the sun  
And I read the sign "No rock throwing is permitted."  
Is this an endless ocean, or a glass house for glass fish  
Not knowing the only time they can break free  
Is on a hook and bobby,  
Let's play catch  
And release.

## Misconceptions

ANDREW HIBSCHMAN

I slam the door to my new Audi, more forceful than I need to be. The morning is already dragging by; rush hour traffic has forced me out of my usual routine. Because the traffic caused me to not be able to stop for my usual triple mocha extra foam and blueberry muffin, I'm going to be forced to drink the break room swill. Fantastic.

The dark grey fortress looms above me, its menacing appearance almost stereotypical because of its nature as a government office building. As I enter the shiny brass doors, I take my last breath of garbage-smelling freedom until my lunch break. The building's lobby is ornately decorated with baroque colonnades and a staircase that twists its way up to a mezzanine level where the building's conference room is located. I flash my ID badge at the rent-a-cop behind a large wooden desk, which is bolted to the floor. "Morning, Johnny," I flash the guard a grin.

"It's Frank."

Oops. "Sorry," I say dismissively. I'm not. I can never remember this guy's name, not like it even matters. Johnny buzzes me through the bullet-proof glass door that leads to the staff elevators. I glance at my watch. 7:53. Maybe I'll just skip the coffee.

"Tom!" I look around, startled by the sound of my name yelled so early in the morning.

"Oh. Morning, Luke." Luke, another office drone, is walking towards me. As he reaches me, the elevator arrives and we both get in. His shirt is only half tucked-in, and his tie is loose around his neck. "Dressy as usual, I see."

"Ha. Ha. Sorry I don't spend hours getting ready for this hell hole. We can't all love our jobs as much as you do."

He's at least partially right: I do love my job. I reach up and brush my hair back. In the process, my sleeve falls back from my wrist; I'd forgotten to button my cuffs in my rush to get out of the house this morning.

"Whoa! Is that a Rolex?"

I quickly put my arm down and start buttoning the cuff over my watch. "Yeah. It's an early birthday present from my parents."

"Dude, your birthday's not for another like eight months."

"It was on sale or something. Look, why does it matter? We're going to be late."

The elevator reaches our floor, and I start walking towards our part of the building. I glance over my shoulder to see if Luke is following me, which he is.

We arrive at room 346 with barely a minute to spare. "Morning, Steve." I nod to my supervisor and head towards my cubicle. On the way, I stop at the coat closet and hang my jacket up. Won't be needing that in the sauna that is my work place. As I sit down at my desk, Janet, the chick at the cubicle next to mine, runs in the door. Breathless, she smiles at me.

"Good morning, Tom."

"Yeah, you too." Janet sits at her desk and spins her chair around to face me.

"How are we today?"

I hate it when she does that. 'We.' Who the hell does she think she is? "Oh, you know, the usual. Nothing new or exciting."

"I find that hard to believe. An interesting guy like yourself?" Janet leans forward slightly; not enough to seem slutty, but enough that she knows I'll notice. Her attraction to me is obvious. Whore.



“Uh, well, it was a slow weekend, I guess.”

“Yeah, I spent the whole weekend watching old movies on TV. It was nice, relaxing, you know?” No. I know what she’s trying to do, fishing for clues that I’d met someone this weekend, letting me know that she’s still available. Her desperation is palpable and sickening. What ever happened to playing hard to get?

Janet takes her lunch from her bag and stands up. “Need me to put anything in the fridge for you?”

“No, thanks. I’m going out to get my lunch today.”

“Oh. Okay. Looking for some company?”

Definitely not. “I guess so. But just so you know it’s got to be pretty quick. I need to run to the store.”

“I’ll go with you!”

Great... “Great!” Janet sits down at her desk and throws her bag lunch into the trash.

I hit my computer’s silver power button and wait for it to boot up. The Windows logo appears on the screen, and a status bar tracks the computer’s progress. While I wait for the glacially slow start-up to finish, I start going through my inbox to see what the day holds in store for me.

My job is simple and mind-numbing. Everyday, I get a stack of hand-written 1040s—at least a hundred—with a name, address, phone number, social security number, checking account routing number, and tons of other personal information on each. After looking over the paper and highlight the main pieces of information, I enter the data into a program on my computer, which then takes it and puts it in a big database in some big government office in D.C. I’m not sure what they do with it. All I know is that it has to do with taxes, since I work for the IRS. We get these forms all year. Some are just correction forms, which come from the central office in D.C., and for those I just log on and change what needs to be changed.

Janet comes back from the break room, where she’d apparently been getting a cup of coffee. I notice that she’s unbuttoned the top 2 buttons of her off-white blouse, and that her dark brown skirt stops just above her knees. So much for appropriate work clothes.

“So, Tom, are you sure you don’t want to come to the barbecue at my place this weekend? It’s going to be a blast, and I can promise Steve won’t be there.”

“Thanks, but I’m really busy that day.”

“But I haven’t even told you when it is.”

“Oh. Sorry, go ahead.”

Janet smiles, probably thinking that she's got me hooked, like some big dumb fish on a line. “It's Sa-”

“Can't come. Sorry. I'm refinishing my hardwood floors. Maybe next time.” Janet's face falls, like some little kid who just got told by an angry parent that she can never, ever, get a pony.

“I see. Have fun with that.”

“Yep.” I start putting my stuff in order, already intent on the day's work.

“Got alota work today?”

“What now, Janet?” I hope she notices how annoyed I'm trying to look. An extra-long sigh will probably help.

Janet looks hurt when she hears my clearly-exasperated sigh. Overkill? Maybe. Oh, well. “I was just wondering if you have a lot of work to do today. That's all.”

“No more than usual.” Janet does the same thing I do, just not as well. Maybe I'll throw her a line. “How 'bout you?”

Janet walks towards me a step. I roll a step away. “Oh, not too much. You know, I was looking the other day, and it seems like you and I usually have...”

I stop listening and Janet's voice fades into the background. It was really just a simple yes or no question.

After a minute or so, Janet notices that I'm not listening and walks away. She sits down at her desk, moving her stack of papers to the left of her keyboard as she goes. She turns on her computer and tunes her desk radio to some feel-good station. I look at my desktop, which is loaded and ready to go. I open a blank document, as well as the program I use to input information into the IRS database.

The first part of my morning goes by smoothly. I make my way through a third of my stack, inputting the required information before I decide to take a bathroom break. Before I leave, I close out of all the open programs on my computer for safety reasons.

When I return, I take the next paper from the stack and look at it. Terrence Pancose. I navigate my way to the correct page on the IRS database re-open the program I use to input the information. While it loads, I take out a neon green highlighter, my favorite, and work my way down the page. Terrence is from some small town in the western part of the state that I've never heard of. His place of employment is listed as “self-employed.” Whatever he actually does, he sure pays a lot of taxes.



I open the blank document and start typing some of Terrence's information. All the essentials: name, social security number, checking account routing number, date of birth, etc.

When I finish, I switch back to the data input program and start filling in all the required fields: name, social security number, checking account routing number, date of birth, as well as Terrence's answers to the other questions on the form. Later, I'll take the information in the Word document to this guy I know who'll give me \$1000 cash for every information-filled document I give him. I don't know what he does with them after that, and frankly, I don't care, so long as he pays me.

By the time lunch rolls around I'm ready for a break. I turn to Janet. "Ready?" She jumps up and grabs her coat and purse. I grab my jacket on the way out.

We leave the office building and I start walking my usual quick step down the street. "Hey, Tom! Wait up." I turn around and see Janet running to catch up.

"Sorry. Guess I forgot." I didn't forget.

Janet catches up and smiles. "Oh, no worries. Where do you want to eat?"

I look around. "Uh... there." I point randomly at some sandwich place that catches my eye.

"Oooh! I love Tony's!" Janet squeals.

"Awesome." Janet doesn't catch my sarcasm. Go figure.

"You're going to love this place!" Janet darts across the street, and now I'm the one who has to run to keep up. I enter the store a few steps behind Janet, just in time to hear her say, "Tony! I brought Tom with me. You know, the one I was telling you about?"

Some balding, wiry guy smiles at me from behind the counter. "Yes, Tom. It's so good to finally meet you."

Finally? "Uh, yeah, you too."

Tony turns to Janet. "The usual?"

"Please. Make it two." She turns to me. "You're going to love it. Tony makes this sandwich special for me."

So we sit at some table by the window and wait for our food, whatever it may be. Janet tries to strike up a conversation, but she eventually realizes that I'm not interested. After a few minutes of waiting, Tony brings over these triple layer monstrosities. He puts one in front of me and I see at least three kinds of meat, two types of cheese, let

lucerne, onion, and mayo and mustard. It looks great. I pick it up and start eating. The sandwich disappears piece by piece, and before I realize, it's gone.

"You know, what I mean?" Janet's voice breaks me out of my sandwich-eating reverie.

"Huh?" Interesting. She'd been talking the whole time and I hadn't noticed.

"I was just saying how much I love this sandwich."

"Yeah, it was good." I check my watch. "You about ready to go?"

"Ok." She stands up.

"Here, I'll get this one." Janet looks thrilled. Oops. "Oh, no. Looks like I forgot my wallet..."

"I'll get it!" Janet's smile doesn't waver. Impressive. "You can pay next time." Right, next time.

We leave Tony's and work our way down Market Street. "What are you looking for?" Janet asks, as if it is any of her business.

"A retirement present for my mom."

"Awww. That's so sweet! I'll help you pick something out."

"Yeah, maybe." I see the store I've been looking for. The company's bull's-eye logo takes up the entire wall above the entrance, and the electric hum that accompanies the opening of the sliding glass doors is quickly followed by a blast of overly-heated air.

"So, where should we go first?" Janet asks as we enter.

Instead of responding, I walk up to the checkout and grab a gift card from the rack next to the register. I slap it on the conveyor belt. "\$75 on this, please," I tell the dumpy woman behind the register. She scans the card and hands it back to me with a smile. I turn to leave and see Janet staring at me with this look on her face. "Ready?" I ask, and she nods and we leave the building. We start walking towards work and for once, Janet isn't talking, which is a welcome relief from her usual stream of incessant chatter.

We get to the big brass doors, and I'm just about to go in when Janet stops me. "Wait a second." Impatient, I glance at my watch. "What?"

"Look, I can handle your dismissive attitude and your barely concealed contempt. I can deal with you underhanded and snide remarks, but the fact that you seem to care so little about everyone else, even your own mother, is just too much." Janet puts her hand on her hip and keeps talking. "You are just not a nice person. I've done every-



Thing I can be nice to you, inviting you out even though my friends beg me not to, but I do it anyway. Not that it matters; you're always busy. But you know what? I don't even care. No one can stand to be around you, not even for a minute. Enjoy being alone." Janet storms off, leaving a wake of silent suits behind her. I guess she was screaming pretty loud.

I just stand there for a while, letting her words wash over me. Where did that come from? Janet? The girl who has so clearly been into me for so long? Have I misread everything? Impossible. I never even saw this coming. The suits are all still looking at me. I recognize some of them from my office, but no one comes over to me. There's no way Janet could have meant those things. Who does she think she is, anyway?

I start walking into the building, trying my best not to look around. I realize that I forgot my ID and look at the guard hopefully. When I realize it's the same guy from earlier, John—Frank—my heart sinks. I walk up to him slowly, expecting the worst.

"What?" Guess he hasn't forgotten me. His voice is cold, unfeeling.

"Uh, hey, Frank. I left my badge upstairs. Anyway, could you just buzz me through?"

"Nope. It's against company policy. Sorry." His sinister smile belies his true feelings, and I can tell he's still mad about earlier.

"Frank. I was a jerk earlier, I'm sorry."

"That's nice of you. I'm still not letting you through, though."

"Fantastic." I move to one side and take out my phone to call and ask someone to bring down my ID badge. I can't help but think of how things could have been different if I'd just taken the time to acknowledge the guard, to learn his name. How I could have been nicer to Janet, listened to her boring stories every once in a while. I flip open my phone and start dialing. It connects, and I listen as it starts ringing.

"Hello?"

There's always time to make things better. "Janet? It's Tom. Look, I'm sorry about everything."

# A Still Life

LAUREN BALLIET

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# Poetry Reading

JONATHAN JULIANO

I've been looking for a bar with open mic nights that feature slam poetry. I would even settle for open mics with acoustic guitar acts, and the occasional poetry. I want a trendy place where I can impress people, and where people could challenge me. Coming home from school for the summer, I kept thinking about this, almost fantasizing about it. I would walk onto the stage with swagger. Eyes would be looking at me, but mine would shut out the blinding spot light. It's a known fact that every poet or singer seems more passionate when they are performing with their eyes closed. It shows vulnerability and pain. I would spit my poem at the audience like a civil rights activist in the 1960's spat at white cops. I would stun the crowd into silence. They would cling to every word, and I would be the best thing anyone in that bar has ever heard. I would eventually gain a group of intellectual friends. Friends that would engage in discussion using the word existentialism, and talk in depth about books and music. I think poetry nights are more of a Generation X, early 1990's, type of thing though, and going to a poetry night now is more pathetic than intellectual. The events probably were more like my fantasy in the 1990's, when Starbucks was still in Seattle, and cigarettes could still be smoked without being ostracized out of bars or coffee places, but not now. When I came home for the summer there was a blurb from a newspaper my mom cut out for me about a poetry group, called Shoreline Poetry, in my town that meets once a month.

On a whim I emailed the address in the newspaper blurb, and got a response telling me the place and time to meet. I really did not want to go. I had a feeling it would be all old people and me, sort of like in the movie *My Girl*, but she was little and with cool college students in the a-changing times of the 1960's. This was just going to be me and a bunch of elderly people. The day came and I left for the old town hall and my mom asked me why I was going so early. I told her I wanted to make sure I was going to be in the right place. But I really wanted to get there in order to scope out the situation I was getting myself into. I pulled into the parking lot and saw two cars with the bumper stickers, "Hand Cross Country." I hope they didn't see me. I didn't want to see my former teammates of mine. I try and pretend like

I don't live in my town any more, even though I still do. Only my body sleeps here though, mentally I haven't lived in Madison since junior year of high school. I avoided the two cars, and walked into the dark building and down the hallway.

The dim blue light of dusk crept into the building. All the doors were closed. I walked up the old wooden staircase. There were more rooms on the second floor. I walked into this one big room. It was where the spare chairs, tables, and extra dust was kept. The room had high windows and was probably the old business meeting type of room when this was the actual town hall. I walked back down stairs. I got the sudden urgency to quietly get the hell out of there. I knew this was going to be pathetic. I could not drag myself to the level of reciting poetry with old people. I walked down the stairs skipping every other stair. I landed on the last step and could see that a light was on in a small classroom type of room that was not on before. That's where they must be meeting, I thought. There was no one else in this building. If I had been a second later, whoever turned on the light, and myself, would have awkwardly walked by each other. He would have glared at me knowing I am there for the meeting but not saying anything. I would stare back at him, communicating nonverbally that he and his group was pathetic. I am a good writer. I am not going to stoop down to this. I may sound conceited but the only thing worse than bad poetry, is when the writer of the bad poem actually believes he's good. Ask any high school high school English teacher while grading his student's poems, or anyone in high school or college that has been involved with a literary magazine. I was involved in the high school literary magazine and it was awful. Everything was cliché, black, and depressing, but not about anything real just stupid high school bitching.

I peered around the corner, and saw an old man in the room. The fluorescent lights made everything look yellow and counterfeit when contrasted with the natural blue light that invaded the windows and usurped the town hall. The old guy confirmed everything I didn't want. Up until that point there was a chance it could be kind of hip and cool twenty-somethings. But now I knew it wouldn't be. I called my girlfriend and told her I had to leave. She told me, "You already drove there, just go." I told her I couldn't and I needed to leave. A part of me was curious about the meeting, and I knew when I went home I would have to tell my mom what happened. But if I went into that meeting I would have to kill myself. I changed my mind, then changed



It back, and changed it a third time. I got in my run down, rusting Pontiac and drove out of the parking lot. I got to the stop sign and instead of turning right, the way home, I turned left, and left, and left, and left.

I was an FBI agent on a stakeout during the McCarthyism era. I made note of who went into the building, who came out, what they were holding, and approximate age. I looked for any possible evidence that could help me make a decision. Binoculars would have been a dream because I parked too far away from the entrance to make out people's faces. I was only an amateur spy, an Inspector Gadget to James Bond. I saw someone riding a bike, so I thought he must be fairly young and maybe even a hipster, and then I saw a blonde girl walk in, so I thought maybe it wouldn't be so bad. I stepped out of my car just as Father Time pulled in. He is the oldest man I have ever seen in my life. He got out of his car and limped his way into the building. I asked him if he was going to the poetry meeting. He said, "Excuse me, the what." And I asked him again, and again he didn't hear me so I figured, "Forget it, this man was going to fall into eternal sleep before finishing his answer anyways."

I walked into the building, and walked right into the room. I introduced myself, and said a little about myself. Father Time walked in after me, and sat down next to me. I immediately recognized one of the older women. She was a staple substitute teacher, some one that every kid knew and looked forward to when their teacher was out. She didn't recognize me though. She is the substitute teacher that everyone always took advantage of. I wonder how many paper footballs she has seen, or how many balled up pieces of paper have hit her in the back of the head when she was writing on a chalk board. I didn't know she wrote poetry. I thought her only other hobby besides filling in for teachers was buying cat food in mass quantities. She had a short grey bob-cut and was wearing a thrift store bubble vest. She was the first person to read a poem. It was about flowers and spring and about her inability to smell. I thought this was perfect and was only a quirk that a crazy cat lady could have.

There were eight people there in total. Only three besides me were under the age of thirty, and their seemed to be a history among them. The bike rider was sitting to my left and was balding. He had a belly like he was smuggling a bowling ball out of a sporting goods store. It didn't get flatter when he leaned back. It didn't get bigger when he leaned forward, and he didn't try to shamefully suck it in. It just pro-

truded out of his shirt for every one to see. From the small banter throughout the meeting, I figured he seemed to be the type of person that was always in the back of hole-in-the-wall movie theaters by himself, eating a family-sized popcorn without a family. He stole looks from the plain blonde girl that was sitting at the table across from him. Blonde Girl didn't wear makeup. She was dressed in all black with pink Vans checkerboard slippers, and seemed like an adult that used to be the stereotypical gothic girl in high school. She said she didn't like the poem she was about to read because it "wasn't her;" mainly because her poem ended up being about pink lemonade picnics, and sunny days. Bowling Ball gave her poem extra compliments that he didn't give anyone else. He said nice things to her, but their was a tone of "I masturbate in a dark corner to your rhyme scheme" underlying his critiques.

The meeting was not well facilitated, and the writers were not that good. Nobody was moving the meeting along. After someone read, everyone would sit there for a minute pretending to go over the poem in their head, but what they were really thinking was, "What's a nice thing I can say to this person." When compliments and criticisms lifted from the air, the dreaded awkward silence set in, and when it was too much to bear, the next person would read their poem. Sitting next to the blonde girl was a middle aged man and I think his wife. He looked like a wealthy person from the town except he was one of those rich people that rebelled against the snobs of the town. He wore a sport jacket that matched his red stubble, and around his wrist was a bracelet with a peace sign on it that said "I am different than my beach front peers." This was a type of bracelet only bought by suckers on vacations. I'm sure there was some symbolism to it that the guy with an ethnic accent in the hut/gift shop made up right before selling it to the rich amateur writer. His poem was probably one of the best ones in the room. He read with confidence, and the poem was almost meaningful. The only problem though was that he followed one undeveloped metaphor with another to try to be as deep and creative as possible. However, the poem became oversaturated like he was trying to prove something to the reader. He set scenes with his clichés, telling the audience that rain was like a car wash, but then following that with clouds being like blankets. Maybe that's just his style but the imagery should be coherent and go together to make it more powerful. He ended it with an open thought that was supposed to make the reader ponder harder, and allude to a grand conclusion that answers



the mysteries of life. People gave him compliments and nobody really criticized the poem, and then trying to move the silence and the meeting along, the wife went.

His wife had smoky hair, and birds must have walked all over her face because cracks and crows feet were everywhere. I imagine the poetic couple to be the open relationship swinger types of people. They swapped partners in the 1970's when it was popular, and now in 2008 they don't let each other hear their poetry until these meetings. The woman seemed like a person that would use the phrase "free spirit" too much in conversation, and looked how I pictured Mother Nature to look. She read three poems. The first one compared the government, and the war in Iraq to the book Wizard of Oz. This is a trick intellectual people do to say "I am better than you." They read obscure books, and badmouth the movies because they weren't as good. Then, the writer will use these references in their writing to be obscure, but familiar at the same time. I have done this before and is why I can pick it out so well. The poem was pretty good, but was too specific to an article she read about the war, and so she had to give us so much background for us to understand the poem. Her other poem was about dead people at a cemetery, and tried to be creative but didn't take the idea far enough. Her last poem was again wrapped in obscurity. She must have seen a nature special or looked up platypus on Wikipedia because the poem was about monotremes, the scientific term for the animal. I don't even like it when science teachers use scientific names, let alone regular people. There is no reason to use the scientific word for any animal in normal every day life, unless you are trying to sound smarter than everyone else. She used the word monotreme just enough to make me visualize myself hanging from a belt tied to the ceiling. All in all though, I thought Mother Nature was the most intriguing person there, and I liked her the most. I think it might just be because she kept giving me strange looks because I sat across from her.

After her poems and the compliments given, we got off topic and talked about platypuses and other uninteresting facts. Then the leader of the group spoke. He was the one that created this group, and sends the emails organizing everything. He had a beard resembling Dante's in the movie *Clerks* (obscure reference alert), and looked like the lonely nice guy in every movie that is supposed to end up with the girl, but in real life never does. I imagined him going to open mic nights solely to meet women, but always failing. His poem was scat-



tered but not bad. He used one of his stanzas as a pick up line, which just proves that I am accurate at reading people. In the stanza, a girl walked up to him after a reading and asks him, "What happens to the girl on the train?" The poet responded by saying "She has a baby boy who grows up to seduce a woman by reciting poetry." The last line was as vague as the first however, and the three stanzas were as loosely sewn together as a dusty stuffed animal in the back of a closet.

After he read, Blonde Girl jumped all over Dante's poem, and said all these great things, and told him that he should watch some random movie that is the same style of his random writing. I didn't pay attention at all, because I didn't really care about what they had to say. What I did pay attention to was how they interacted. It was evident to me that they had some history like in a bad movie. The girl with no make up, and the guy that is every girl's friend because he is too nice, have been friends for a very long time, and have thought about dating one another but never brought it up before. Then I thought about Bowling Ball to my left, and how he fit into this love story of awkward people. Peace Bracelet acted like he was better than everybody and told Dante everything that was wrong with his poem. I told him that he could tell a very nice story with two of the stanzas, and elaborate off of those and forget the rest. However no one agreed, and everyone had their own opinions, leaving him more confused than he was before he read it.

It was my turn to recite now, and I still didn't know what I wanted to read. I had two poems. One was the best poem I have ever written, and one I just wrote last week. The first poem was like my secret weapon. I don't even know how I wrote it. Everything just fell into place that night. The poem is so complex, not because of what the poem is about, but because of the tools I used. Usually writing poems takes me tons of rewrites to complete, but I was finished writing this one in fifteen minutes. It has subtle alliteration to make the poem flow, and to create a sense of calmness in the scene and the reader. The imagery is good enough to set the scene, and as the alliteration creates a sense of calmness, half rhymes and internal rhymes create a sense of chaos. The chaos and calmness reflect the characters feelings as the end of the world is approaching, and in the midst of all of this, I play with words and use puns to show my personality as well as further the imagery.

Instead of reading this though, I decided to pull back and read the second poem. I didn't want to come off like I knew I was the best



One in there, and if I am not going to change the first poem then why read it? The group loathed the second poem. I was nervous, and I wasn't used to reading it, so I stuttered and fumbled with it. I always have trouble and get nervous when I read my poems. Since it didn't come out right I had to read it a second time. The group did like the second part of the poem. What they hated was the first stanza. I tried to set the scene in that first stanza, but the group thought that made it confusing, and meaningless. Peace Bracelet jumped all over it saying it's him.

The rest of the people in the group read their poems, and when the meeting ended, the substitute teacher asked about me. She wanted to know what my story was, and if I would become a regular in the group. I said that I am a journalism major at school, and that I might come back to the next meeting. Bowling Ball Tummy asked if I was working. I told him I was interning at the town's newspaper. Blonde Girl laughed because Dante used to work for the same paper. They shared a laugh, and a moment, like there was some story with an unhappy ending to working there. It was at that moment I knew that I would be in this poetry group if I failed. The phrase "those who can't do teach" is for those that decide not to attempt something, and settle on being a teacher. If I choose not to try and be a writer because the risk of failure was too great, and I just become a teacher, then the phrase applies to me. But if I try to be a writer and fail, I will end up in this building, in this room, and in this group, pretending I am still creative because I share two poems a month with a group of senior citizens who have nothing else to do. After the meeting I talked to my friend who I shared all of my poems with. I showed her the poem I shared at the meeting. She told me my beginning doesn't add anything to the poem, and needs to have the same symbolism as the rest of the poem. Fucking Peace Bracelet; he must have gotten to her. I don't know how but he must have.

# Untitled

NICOLE MADAY

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Her lungs inhale the smooth smoke as she rests her head against her bedroom wall. Closing her eyes, she tries to remember what her therapist said. Breathe in four counts; remember to use your diaphragm. Breathe out two counts, releasing the stress, the anger, the anxiety. Four, two. Four, two.

She tries to clear her mind, tries forgetting. She imagines a field, another recommendation from the doctor. A peaceful place in which deer frolic and daisies bloom and happy Little Miss Muffett bullshit. Those meditation exercises never worked for her.

With another puff of her cigarette, she remembers something else she was supposed to have done today. No, this completely negates the breathing exercises, and the happy fields, she bitterly laughed to herself. Perhaps Buddha isn't for her.

Sitting up, feeling slightly dazed from the pseudo-meditation, she wraps her arms around her body, firmly rubbing her hands up and down as if to awaken her body from catatonia. The heat never works in this damn house. What am I doing here?

Rising out of bed, she decides to take matters into her own hands. Throwing a sweatshirt on, she wanders around the room without direction, searching for something, an assignment that calls to her. Unfortunately, she has already tidied up her room fifteen minutes and eleven seconds ago. Everything immaculate, in its place, arranged and organized just how she likes it. As it should be. The only thing she can ever control in her life is her sock drawer.

Digressing to the laundry room, she removes towels from the dryer. The warmth of them in her arms feels like body heat, and a pang runs through her. Towels as a substitute for human contact? We're going to pretend that insanely pathetic thought didn't happen.

Someone walks in the front door, and she stiffens. She isn't in the mood for the questions today. "How are you doing? Have you talked to him?" Sighing deeply, she carries her towels into the living room, preparing to make her way up the stairs.

"Hey. How are you?" her roommate's eyes feign sadness; pity shines through.



“Fabulous,” she barely replies, does not make eye contact but shuffles slowly past as though struggling through a crowd of people.

The air feels far too heavy. She hears her roommate humming some inane song and finally shut her bedroom door. Relief floods through her. Communication is too draining to even attempt. She prefers to be alone with her thoughts, to allow the sadness to overwhelm her like something evil rising in her chest. There are no words anyway. Alone, she could break into hysterics if she wants to. Cry on her bedroom floor in the fetal position; scream out the sobs to the empty, open air.

The phone rings, and her heart leaps out of her chest, spilling onto the bedroom floor.

Maybe?

Never mind, it's just her mother. Checking on her again.

Walking over to her bedroom window, she delicately pushes the blinds to the side. The sun begins to fall, spreading shadows all over the city. Someone rides past the house on a bicycle. The irritating barks of a dog next door, cars beeping their horns. The sound of a plastic bottle slams into the recycling bin on the porch, resounding loudly through the silence of dusk.

For a moment, she allows herself to stop feeling so much. The peace of the evening encloses her like something familiar.

But just as it quickly as it comes, the peace is interrupted. The situation reasserts itself, flooding memories of the past 48 hours back to her mind.

Heavy now, suddenly exhausted, it takes every muscle in her body to carry herself back to bed. Reaching for another cigarette, she gingerly lights it before grasping it tightly. The smoke fills her lungs in a kind of rejuvenation, something that allows her a moment to just be, without the impossible reality engulfing her again.

Glancing at the clock, she sees it's only 7:15.

It's gonna be a long night.

# Catch your Death

HAYLEY BOYLE

Sometimes in the winter it's so cold that if I sit outside for long enough, it feels as if my eyes begin to freeze open. Sometimes I hope they do freeze open. I could sit there for what would feel like an eternity, watching the world through ice until I'd thaw in the spring. I've been told it's a good way to "catch my death." I always laugh when I hear that phrase: "You'll catch your death." I laugh because maybe that's why I sit outside in this tree on the coldest days of the year—so that I can catch my death. I think I'd like to catch my death one day because it's probably a better solution than wasting away in the cold hoping that my eyes will freeze open.

Every so often when I sit out here breathing in and out and watching my breath turn to clouds of wisp, I think of you. I think about how you caught your death—how it must have been quick.

Whenever I think of you now, I think of your body the day that the accident happened. Even as you lay there in that tangled mess of car and glass, you had that beautiful peaceful look on your face, and I knew that wherever you were, you were happy. I knew because I'd seen that same look so many times before — especially when we were lying out beneath the stars and just listening to each other breathe. I'd look over at you on those nights, I'd smile, and I'd think to myself, "God damn. You are one lucky son of a bitch. You really snagged a good one." Then I would turn my head back up towards the sky, close my eyes, and listen to the humming of the crickets and your breathing. Those were the days when I enjoyed the warm hazy summer evenings in this town. These days, all I ever want is the winter's bitter touch since it's numbing.

Now you're just memories to me and the most vivid one is your dead body with a peaceful look on your face. They aren't all bad memories though, like that one is. Some of them are good. Some of them are like the memory of the hazy summer nights we spent together. Some of them involve the vacant benches we used to find on the crowded boardwalk and the stories we made up about the people who passed us by.

"That woman is afraid," you once said about a young woman in a



Fight summery dress who walked by us. She was the kind of woman with a premature grey streak in her hair, but it was distinguishing — the kind of streak that made her mysterious and untouchable and irresistible to older men.

"And that man she is with is the reason," you said about the staunch looking man beside her. He was one of those older men that couldn't resist her fair and young beauty, yet distinguishing mature mark. You conjured up their story saying, "They're engaged, and they're soon to be married, but something about him makes her lie in bed at night silently dreading that day."

Every story you spun was somehow dark and cynical. No one was ever fearless and happy in them. People were always scared and depressed. I think it was your way of compensating, but for what, I'm afraid I was never sure, although I knew you were compensating for something. Perhaps your stories made your own unhappiness in your life easier to deal with, or perhaps I was just fooling myself and you had nothing to compensate for at all. Maybe you just liked to think that not all stories had happy endings.

I couldn't blame you of course, for you were right. Not all stories had happy endings. In fact, many of them didn't—many of them ended with sadness and suffering. But while I watched you smile as you sat there telling tales of the people who walked by, I couldn't help but think ours was one story that would end happily. After all, I had you, and what could be unhappy about that?

Even with the numbing cold, the memories of you still sting. What could be unhappy about having you? Well, for one, I didn't anymore. You were gone. You were gone along with the metal and the glass and the loud sirens, and the only things you left behind were memories, a shoebox full of old photos, and a pair of pink shoes. Sometimes I'd sit in the middle of my apartment floor going through the shoebox of photos and I'd keep the pair of shoes beside me. The shoes were a symbol to me, or something like that. It was as if I wasn't really alone in that cold room sifting through your photos like some lost soul searching for an answer that you might have left behind. But I always kept the shoes there so that maybe, just maybe, if you were in the room with me, your feet wouldn't be cold.

On some days when I missed you I'd listen to your favorite CDs of Andrea Bocelli and I'd let myself be swept away by his music like you had done so many times on cold days when we'd sit in my living room. The words were incomprehensible to us, but they were calming. On

Those days it would be so easy to get lost in the photos, the music, the memories, and your unseen presence. I remember that you used to always tell me, "It's something about the language and his voice that makes me cry. It's something about the way that I feel empowered and strengthened by his words. Whenever I need to cry, I know I can just listen and be swept away."

A droplet landed onto the crinkled photo of you smiling at the camera in the grass. I quickly wiped my eyes and bit my tongue. And then I did something that surprised myself. I smiled. I smiled because another memory had come back to me. It was the day you had showed up at my apartment in a pretty little skirt and tank top with an elaborate sun hat, pounding impatiently at my door before the sun had even risen. I remember being angry with you for waking me from my sleep, but having no time to express my frustration with you because you rushed inside talking a million miles an hour and telling me to quickly change.

"Hurry up! Faster! We'll miss it!" you shouted excitedly at me. "Get some jeans on! We've got to go!" I couldn't even get a word in because you were so overwhelming, but I did what you asked. You then took my hand and pulled me out the door, through the hallway, and down the stairs to your car. And then? Then we just drove. We drove for easily twenty minutes in silence before you pulled over to the side of the road and ordered me out of the car. Without saying anything else you ran into the wooded area beside the road, and I, like an obedient puppy, followed you adoringly.

When I broke through the other side of the underbrush what I saw took my breath away. You stood there twirling with your arms above your head as the sun came up over a sparkling lake. And you were beautiful. I couldn't believe my eyes. Your black hair enveloped you as you spun, and danced in the light. Finally you fell to the ground and your chest pumped up and down, as you smiled. The memory was just as clear as the photograph. And you were beautiful.

Those were the things that made you happy. As much as you never wanted to admit it, you were a hopeless romantic. Beneath that cynical and sarcastic exterior lay a little girl whose dream was to run off into a sunset and arrive on the other side at a sunrise. You may not have cared much for people, and you may have always given them tragic endings to their tales, but your mind was set on having your own happy ending and proving to the world that it was possible for at least one person to make it out alive.



It's funny how you wanted to prove that you'd be the one to make it out alive, especially since I'm the one left here on the apartment floor sifting through our old photos and you're gone. I sometimes got the impression that you wanted to prove to me that you were immortal. So many of my memories of you involve me telling you not to do something because of the danger involved. You always said, "Hah! I laugh in the face of danger!" and then you'd do something crazy like the time you jumped off the roof of the garage at your Aunt's house.

We were having dinner there that night. I don't remember the specific occasion. It might have been your mother's birthday. But whatever the reason, you didn't want to go alone and so you brought me. Except you didn't really bring me. Instead, you made it incredibly awkward for me, I recall, since you made me drive separately to her house and you had even told me the wrong time. I had gotten there an hour before the rest of you and your family and ended up sitting on a plastic covered couch with two cats sitting on the floor staring intently at me the entire time. I was never fond of cats.

But when you arrived, you rushed in and hugged me. At that moment I knew the hour of plastic couches and staring cats had been worth my wait. After dinner we went into your Aunt's backyard where she had a fairly large one-car garage towards the back. You turned around to face me, smiled, and said, "I want to show you something." I always became nervous when you "had something to show me," because it usually meant something crazy or ridiculous. Sure enough you led me towards the garage and up a ladder onto the roof. We sat there for a while as we digested our meals and the sky around us turned dark. It was at this point that you stood up.

"Sit back down, you'll fall off," I told you. Instead you did exactly what I had been afraid of the entire time. You said, "Oh, I laugh in the face of danger!" and jumped off. I didn't even watch. As soon as you took off I shut my eyes and waited for the sound of a body hitting the ground. When I heard the thump of the impact, I slowly opened my eyes, waiting for another sound of, "Oh, my God! I think I broke something!" but you surprised me once again. You stood there below me with your hands on your hips and said, "What are you waiting for?" With this, I stood up, walked to the other side of the garage, and climbed safely down the ladder. Not only was I never fond of cats, I was never fond of heights either. You were all the things that I wished I could be. Perhaps that's why I loved you like I did. You were the part that completed me. I was timid, reserved, and conventional.

You were the part of me that my mother and father's genes couldn't quite get right. I was missing daring. I was missing outspoken. I was missing all the things that you were made of—and I loved you because of them. You showed me a new world outside of my little three-room apartment—a world where there was crowded boardwalks, fields to dance in, and roofs to jump off.

But now you're gone. You were carried off in a red and white ambulance whose siren seemed to scream directly at me until it faded in the distance, and I was left on the side of that highway that night with scrap metal and broken glass as companions. To this day it still hurts to think about you. I've been reduced back to timidity, reservedness, and conventionality. I'm living back in my little three-room apartment and the world outside continues on without me, but most importantly it continues on without you, which, if you had asked me before the accident, I would have never thought possible.

So, to pass the lonely days, I sit here in the middle of my living room floor with my memories of you, the box of photos, and your pink shoes. I let Andrea Bocelli's voice fill me up, and I let myself cry.

Sometimes it's good to cry. Even though you'd be the one to tell me to pick myself up and move on in my life, sometimes it is good to cry.

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## To Define the Lack

ERICA DE LA CRUZ

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You were looking for a place to stay that night,  
and I said "why not?"  
I welcomed you home.  
But dear valentine,  
when the cool fresh morning was over  
you no longer needed my pulsating heat.  
Both my silence and yours, the dissonant beat of dissent,  
The remains of my fair-weather phantom.

And often I have slept to dream of waking up in your arms.



But today, I was roused by a new vision,  
That my arms are the instruments of embrace I have been longing for  
Cradling me when I have long since forgotten care  
and promising to never forget me in the morning.

But I can not wrap all I am inside myself just yet.

I turn on the radio because  
your silence lingers tonight.

I have known it so well.

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## How to Teach Perspective to History Students

CHRISTOPHER GROSSO

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Imagine if on that historic moment in 1969,  
when Neil Armstrong first stepped off that ladder  
& onto the moon in that 'giant leap for mankind,'  
imagine if a bunch of moon monsters suddenly  
jumped out from behind a moon rock & started  
devouring Neil in a rabid frenzied feast of gore.  
Buzz Aldrin would be one darn-lucky astronaut.

# Artwork

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<b>Backwards Love</b> JONATHAN JULIANO	9
<b>A Midsummer's Lunch</b> LAUREN BALLIET	25
<b>Teahouse Bridge</b> REBECCA DOBRZYNSKI	47
<b>A Still Life</b> LAUREN BALLIET	55

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